

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9107
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4523

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT PEPR PBOR LE US UK IS
SUBJ: PROPOSAL THAT WESTERN EMBASSIES INTERCEDE REGARDING
BEIRUT SHELLING

1. SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO THE BRITISH EMBASSY, DANY CHAMOUN IS PROPOSING THAT AS A FIRST STEP TOWARDS A CEASE-FIRE ON BEIRUT, THE REGULAR LEBANESE ARMY SHOULD BE ORDERED TO PUT TWO UNITS OF 30 MEN EACH IN TWO PARTICULAR HOT SPOTS. DANY, PURPORTEDLY REPRESENTING THE RELATIVELY MODERATE FACTIONS OF THE CHAMOUNISTS AND THE PHALANGE, SUGGESTS THAT THE WESTERN EMBASSIES IN BEIRUT PROPOSE THIS FIRST STEP TO SARKIS. IF IT HAS EFFECT, DANY AND AMIN GEMAYEL COULD THEN CONTACT THE SYRIANS DIRECTLY. THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH AMBASSADORS ARE SKEPTICAL ABOUT THIS PROPOSAL, BUT MAY TRY TO EXPLORE IT WITH THE GOL. END SUMMARY.

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2. BRITISH AMBASSADOR AND HIS COUNSELOR HANCOCK CAME TO SEE US ON AUGUST 7 TO DISCUSS A PROPOSAL FOR ATTEMPTING TO STOP THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT. HANCOCK REPORTED TO US FROM HIS RAW NOTES ON A CONVERSATION HE HAD JUST HAD WITH NABIL NUJAYM, A SENIOR (BUT EXCITABLE) HENCHMAN OF DANY CHAMOUN. LATTER HAD

ASKED NUJAYM TO GIVE HANCOCK THE MESSAGE WHEN DANY WAS UNABLE TO KEEP AN APPOINTMENT WITH HANCOCK. ACCORDING TO NUJAYM HE WAS TO A LARGE EXTENT QUOTING DANY CHAMOUN AND LEBANESE G-2, JOHNNY ABDO. HE SAID THAT DURING THE KHADDAM VISIT TO BEIRUT LAST WEEK KHADDAM CRITICIZED SARKIS FOR FAILING TO COPE WITH THE LEBANESE FRONT AS THE LATTER HAD PROMISED. KHADDAM INDICATED THAT THE SYRIANS WANTED TO DESTROY THE LEBANESE FRONT. HOWEVER, SARKIS HAD TAKEN A HARD LINE AGAINST KHADDAM, SAYING THAT HE COULD NOT ACCEPT EITHER KHADDAM'S ANALYSIS OR HIS PLAN TO DESTROY THE LEBANESE FRONT, WHICH BROADLY REPRESENTS THE CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON. SARKIS NOTED THAT IN THE LATTAKIA MEETING THE LEBANESE HAD OBTAINED SYRIAN AGREEMENT TO INTRODUCE THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO BEIRUT STEP BY STEP. KHADDAM REPLIED THAT BEFORE HE COULD AGREE WITH THIS HE WOULD HAVE TO CONSULT ASAD. KHADDAM THEN TURNED TO THE PROBLEM OF SOUTH LEBANON AND ASSERTED THAT THE LEBANESE UNIT MUST GO THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN AREAS. SARKIS WITH HOSS, BOUTROS AND KHOURY PRESENT, SAID THAT THIS WAS A LEBANESE PROBLEM.

3. NUJAYM THEN EXPLAINED TO HANCOCK THAT THERE IS A MODERATE GROUP IN THE LEBANESE FRONT HEADED BY AMIN, GEMAYEL, DANY CHAMOUN AND NUJAYM HIMSELF. WITHIN THE KATAIB THERE IS A COMMITTEE WHICH IS SET UP TO COPE
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WITH BASHIR BUT IT HAS BROKEN DOWN. MEANWHILE AMIN AND DANY HAVE DEVELOPED A PROPOSAL TO END THE FIGHTING IN BEIRUT. THE PROPOSAL IS THAT SARKIS SEND TWO SMALL REGULAR ARMY GROUPS OF 30 MEN EACH INTO TWO PARTICULARLY HOT PLACES IN THE SYRIAN-CHRISTIAN CONFRONTATION AREA-- THE PLACE SASSIN AND THE PLACE SAIDE. THEIR OBJECTIVE WOULD BE TO COOL OFF THE FIGHTING LONG ENOUGH TO ENABLE REPRESENTATIVES OF DANY AND AMIN TO GO OVER TO CHTAURAH AND TALK TO THE SYRIAN G-2, MOHAMMED AL-GHANIM. NUJAYM COMMENTED THAT HOSS' ATTITUDE TOWARD THE PROSPECT OF PARTS OF THE REGULAR LEBANESE ARMY ENTERING BEIRUT IS "BENEVOLENT" BUT HE WOULD LIKE A HIGHER PROPORTION OF SUNNIS IN SUCH UNITS.

4. NUJAYM CONTENDED TO HANCOCK THAT THERE ARE ELEMENTS OF A BARGAIN. IF THE REGULAR LEBANESE ARMY WILL COME INTO BEIRUT, DANY WOULD ARRANGE TO HAVE THE CHAMOUNISTS PUBLICLY DISASSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM HADDAD. HOWEVER, ENTRY OF THE LEBANESE ARMY INTO EAST BEIRUT WOULD BE A PRE-CONDITION. SUCH A COMPROMISE WOULD KEEP THE SYRIANS FROM LOSING FACE. SPECIFICALLY THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD GO TO THE TUEINI BUILDING IN THE PLACE

SASSIN AND TO THE "CAKE HOUSE" IN PLACE SAIDE, WHICH IS NEAR CHAMOUN'S HOUSE. IF THE SITUATION IS UN-BLOCKED, AMIN WOULD MAKE A PRO-SYRIAN STATEMENT AND THEN HE OR HIS REPRESENTATIVE WOULD PROCEED TO CHTOURA TO MEET THE SYRIAN G-2 OFFICER AND DISCUSS AN ENGAGEMENT.

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5. HANCOCK COMMENTED TO NUJAYM THAT THE WESTERN EM-BASSIES HAVE A STRONG FEELING THAT MUCH OF THE UNDER-LINING REASON FOR THE PRESENT CONFRONTATION AND FIGHTING IN BEIRUT IS THAT BASHIR GEMAYEL AND CHAMOUN SR. ARE WORKING TO PROVOKE THE SYRIANS. HANCOCK ASKED DIRECTLY IF NUJAYM WAS ASKING FOR HELP FOR DANY AND AMIN TO DEFUSE THE AMBITIONS OF CHAMOUN SR. AND TO GET A RECONCILIATION GOING. NUJAYM GAVE ONLY AN INDIRECT ANSWER. NUJAYM DID SAY THAT IF BASHIR AND CHAMOUN SR. WERE OUT OF THE WAY, THERE WOULD BE NO ONE AMONG THE CHRISTIANS WHO COULD RESPOND TO THE ISRAELI'S PROMPTINGS. MEANWHILE, HE SAID, ISRAEL IS TELLING BASHIR TO KEEP IT HOT UNTIL AUGUST 15 OR 20, BUT HE DOES NOT KNOW WHY. HE ADDED THAT ISRAEL IS SENDING SOME 122 MILLIMETER ARTILLERY TO THE LEBANESE FRONT, BOTH LONG-BARRELLED AND SHORT-BARRELLED. HE AGREED THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT SUPPORT THE MARONITES

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MILITARILY UNLESS ISRAEL WAS IN AN ACTUAL WAR WITH SYRIA. HE SAID THAT PRESIDENT CHAMOUN COULD BE CONTROLLED IF BASHIR WERE NOT ON THE SCENE. HE ADDED THAT AN IMPORTANT POINT WAS THE ABSENCE OF SAUDI AMBASSADOR ALI SHAER. IF THE LATTER BROUGHT BACK A MESSAGE FROM FAHD TELLING CHAMOUN TO COOL IT, IT WOULD HAVE SOME EFFECT. NUJAYM NOTED THAT THERE ARE 400 SYRIANS WITH ARTILLERY IN THE RIZK TOWER OVERLOOKING THE CHRISTIAN AREA OF EAST BEIRUT. HE INSISTED THAT THE PROPOSAL TO SEND IN 30 MEN TO EACH KEY SPOT GAVE A RAY OF HOPE. IN CONCLUSION HANCOCK SUMMED UP THE PROPOSED BARGAIN AS "HAVING THE REGULAR ARMY IN BEIRUT IN EXCHANGE FOR THE REGULAR ARMY GOING INTO THE SOUTH."

6. HANCOCK GATHERED THAT DANY WOULD LIKE WESTERN EMBASSIES TO URGE SARKIS TO ADOPT THE ABOVE PROPOSAL. BRITISH AMBASSADOR WAKEFIELD AND I ARE VERY SKEPTICAL ABOUT IT (NUJAYM TENDS TO TALK A GREAT DEAL AND IS VERY EXCITABLE). WE NEVERTHELESS AGREED WITH EACH OTHER THAT WE WOULD TRY TO EXPLORE IT WITH SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE GOL, WHEN AND IF IT IS EVEN SAFE TO SEE ANY.
PARKER

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